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ABSTRACT

Alvin Kernan's personal memoir traces life in elitist American universities from post-World War II to the 1990's by recounting his life and career as a student, faculty member, and administrator at Columbia University (New York), Yale University (Connecticut), and Princeton University (New Jersey). The book describes what is was like to be at these institutions during five decades of turbulent change when intellectual, political, social, and technological revolutions reconstructed American higher education. It describes the transformation of higher education in the United States from a meritocratic, positivist, and authoritarian institution to one that is democratic, relativistic, and open. Also discussed are such issues as equality of opportunity for women and minorities, the questioning of administrative and intellectual authority, the appearance of deconstructive types of relativism, the technological shift from printed to electronic information, and the politicization of the classroom. But the book also describes Kernan's intellectual life, one with a diverse group of relationships with such individuals as Lillian Hellman, Robert Penn Warren, Harold Bloom, Stanley Fish, Bobby Seale, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Jean Genet, William Kunstler, and Paul de Man. (AA)

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